

December 17, 2008, Ocean Planning Work Group Conference Call (Notes)

Welcome and Introductions: Introductions of Work Group members

Ocean Planning Work Group Members in attendance (via teleconference):

Robert Boyles (SC DNR)
Marvin Pontiff, Alternate for Carolyn Boltin (SCDHEC-OCRM)
Paul Gayes (Coastal Carolina University)
Trish Jerman (SC Energy Office)
Rick DeVoe (SC Sea Grant)
Dwayne Porter (University of South Carolina)

OCRM staff support: Braxton Davis and Melissa Rada

After introductions, Melissa reviewed the agenda, and discussed the group's progress to date summarizing past meetings and completed next steps. Braxton briefly discussed OCRM's ability to continue supporting the ocean planning effort in light of state budget constraints. At this point, there is no reason to expect a decrease in funds available to support future meetings and ocean report development; however, related research or data collection efforts could be limited.

Proposed final report outline: In response to a request by the group during their October meeting, a draft final report outline was developed as a starting point for the group to consider. This was forwarded to group members prior to the conference call. Melissa asked if there were any concerns or questions about the final report outline and none were raised. Braxton noted that the vision for the report is a type of "plug-and-play" format that can readily incorporate the scoping papers, workshop outcomes, and recommendations.

Updates on Legislative Study Committees: Melissa opened discussions regarding two state legislative study committees: the Natural Gas Feasibility Study Committee and the Wind Study Committee. Dr. John Mark Dean is a member of the Natural Gas Study Committee and Trish Jerman is a member of the Wind Study Committee. Dr. Dean had a conflict and had to sign off from this call, but Trish provided information on both committees. The Natural Gas Study Committee has drafted a report (an interim report has been made available) and a public hearing would be held in Charleston (OCRM staff received a notice on January 12th about the hearing, which will be held January 22, 2009 at 7:00pm at the Trident Technical College Nursing Auditorium located in the 920 Building). Trish pointed out that the primary focus of the Natural Gas Committee was to consider leasing and revenue sharing issues. She explained that at the last meeting of the Committee, representatives from Shell presented information on directional drilling. In response to a question about movement in the industry, the point was made that there are still concerns by the industry regarding how to deal with frozen hydrates.

Jerman also stated that appointments/acceptances for the Wind Study Committee have not been completed, but would hopefully be moving forward soon, possibly end of January 2009.

Offshore Energy: Discussions included previous bills that have been initiated regarding offshore drilling and that the MMS Outer Continental Shelf Policy Committee recently met (an update about the OCS Policy Committee may be forthcoming – Robert Boyles). Braxton will keep the group apprised of congressional developments in 2009 through the Coastal States Organization.

Paul Gayes talked about a proposed wind energy study that is kicking off in the early months of 2009. This is a joint effort among Coastal Carolina University, US Department of Energy and the SC Energy Office. A wind tower and network of instrumented buoys will be installed off the Grand Strand area in state waters.

Braxton asked the group to think about workshops in 2009 and priority topic areas. He suggested moving forward with Virginia Shervette's work on marine monitoring, which will include a workshop in the spring. There were no objections to the workshop being held in March or April 2009. A question arose as to whether the group should focus on alternative energy only, or all offshore energy, including oil and gas. After discussions, the group agreed that South Carolina needs an ocean planning policy for offshore energy in general, with the focus on where structures might be sited and their onshore impacts to coastal communities and resources regardless of the type of energy being developed. In addition, the suggestion was raised that the group's efforts "piggyback" on other ongoing efforts. Rick DeVoe and Trish Jerman agreed that both SC Sea Grant and SC Energy Office would be interested in partnering with OCRM to host a "Coastal Implications of Offshore Energy Development" workshop in the summer of 2009.

The group revisited an idea raised in a past meeting regarding use conflicts and how best to handle this topic area. The group seemed to agree that a workshop might not be the best solution, because to bring together all interested stakeholders for all of the various ocean issues/conflicts in one meeting may be too daunting of a task. A suggestion was made to include a section in the report that explores methods employed in other states, describing what works and what does not. A conclusion was not reached on this but the idea remains open for further consideration and discussion by the group.

Next Steps:

- Finalize consensus statement (supporting sea floor mapping in SC)
- Marine Monitoring Workshop (March or April 09)
- Offshore Energy Workshop (Summer 09)